

"A KINGDOM FOR MICAJAH"

BY VIRGINIA FRAZER BOYLE

"SO you want your freedom, Micajah?"

The negro who had shambled up to the broad veranda dropped his eyes and shuffled uneasily, for there was a world of wonderment and kindness in the master's tone.

"And this is the meaning of all the devilment I've heard of lately—all this talking among the negroes?"

"I reckon so, sar."

"At your age, Micajah, when you've been a self-respecting negro all your life, to go cutting up and making mischief among the other negroes because you want your freedom—that's a fine way to get it! Haven't you always gotten all you asked for? If you wanted freedom, why didn't you come and ask for it?"

The master lifted his glasses to his forehead and looked reproachfully into the queer black face before him.

"Didn't 'low, Ole Marse, as how you'd gib hit ter me," said the negro, humbly, but persistently.

Judge Naylor looked from the rose-twined piazza across the spacious lawn, under whose oaks his own father had romped, and beyond whose limits had joyously hunted with another Micajah, as small and as black as the one before him. He had never dreamed of freedom. Was this the innate craving of the human for something higher, or only a reflection of an external picture? The Judge resolved upon an experiment.

"You are mistaken," said the Judge, gravely, as he knocked the ash from his pipe. "I will give it to you. And what sort of freedom is it that you want, Micajah?"

The old slave scratched his head and swayed uncomfortably.

"Why, jes freedom, Ole Marse."

"What kind of freedom, Micajah? What is it that you want? Speak out, for I am going to give you your freedom for a whole month, and you shall have all that you want to go with it," added the Judge.

Uncle Cage gasped. The enormity of the idea was too much for him.

"And here were Ole Marse jes er-talk-in' 'bout hit lack hit were er chaw er ter-baccy—des es easy an' quiet lack," said Micajah, afterwards, in confidence.

"Well," queried the Judge, "what do you want as a free nigger, Micajah?"

Micajah scraped the dust with his foot; twice he made a little mound of it with his toes and twice smoothed it out.

"I don't wanter be no 'free nigger,' Ole Marse. I des wants freedom."

"Well, go on; don't be afraid; you shall have what you want."

Cage's eyes sparkled, and at last his tongue was loosened.

"I don' wanter work none, Ole Marse. I wants ter hear dat horn blow at five in de mornin', an' I wants ter git up, mad lack, an' holler outen de winder, 'You derved ole raskil, what you wake me up dis time er day fur?' Den I wants ter fling my boot-jack at him, an' go on back ter sleep, I does. Um, um—an' when de ole 'oman 'low, 'Cage, you git up an' make dat fire,' I wants ter 'low back ter her, 'I hain't er-makin' fires fur niggers,' an' I wants ter go back ter sleep, I does—fur, Ole Marse"—here Cage bent closer and almost whispered—"I wants my freedom fum de ole 'oman too, den, an' I don't want her ter git freedom, nohow."

"All right. Anything else to go with your freedom, Micajah?"

All timidity and sullenness were forgotten, and Micajah's face was radiant.

"I don' wanter hope do dat cl'arin', Ole Marse, down by de ribber, an' when de niggers is er-sweatin' an' er-workin', I wants ter be takin' er my ease. Um, um—an' I wants some close, white folks' close; an', Ole Marse, I wantser book lack you got in de house."

"A book? When did you learn to read, Micajah?"

"Lord! Ole Marse, ole Cage cain't read; he des want ter tote hit roun' lack you does."

"You shall have it," said the master, heartily. "Now what else?"

"I wants er little nigger, er little nigger, Ole Marse." Here Micajah scratched

his head thoughtfully. "None er mine, ner none on dis side er de ribber, but er little nigger dat ain' know me 'fore I git freedom—dat ain' see me work. An' I wants dat little nigger ter foller me ever'-whar I goes, er-totin' er palm-leaf fan, an' I wants him ter fan dese foots when I sets down er lays down, an' I wants ter holler at him when he ain' move fas' ernough, an' cuss him when he move too fas', but I wants him ter keep er-foll'in' wid de palm-leaf fan."

Micajah, from sheer ecstasy of contemplation, paused.

"But I don' want er be no 'free nigger,' Ole Marse, lack Free Joe and Yaller Pete, 'case they hain't nuffin but des niggers, 'douten er marster, errer home, ner nuffin; dey don' eben know whar dey git dey nex' sumpen ter eat fum; but I des wants ter taste freedom."

"Very well, Micajah; you shall begin to taste it at once, and I hope that it will do you good. You need not go to the field to-morrow, and you can pick out your little negro from over the river this afternoon. Cindy will give you my old broadcloth—you can roll up the legs and sleeves if they are too long—and I will not forget the book; and, mind, if anybody asks you to do a lick of work for a whole month, you send them to me."

The plantation work went on smoothly without Micajah's presence, much to the disgust of Milly, his wife, who had been reprimanded more than once for berating Cage about his trifling ways. Micajah got his little nigger from over the river—one who had never seen him before, and who was as thoroughly abject and respectful as even Cage could wish; so the latter's joy knew no bounds, and he was rapidly demonstrating, to his master's great amusement, the close kinship of the tyrant and the slave.

Micajah's freedom was a matter of wonderment to the negroes as he looked upon them at their work for a moment with a supercilious air, and made some dignified remark, with his book held carelessly under his arm, "perzackly lack Ole Marse," Cage gleefully congratulated himself—for Cage was wonderfully changed, changed to befit his new condition; and as he turned, followed by the bearer of the palm-leaf fan, many were the envious glances cast.

Such ease, such glory, such a blended

dream of shade, watermelons, and cob pipes smoked undisturbed, varied by the unspeakable delight of "cussin'" and yelling at the little negro!

But even this Arcadia had its shadow, for Cage had never had the ecstasy of flinging a boot-jack at his little slave. Boots and their accompaniment had been part of the requirements which his master had provided, with the promise that the jack could be flung if the boots were worn; but Cage had been an unshod child of nature, for in that equable climate a foot-covering at any season of the year was only a matter of effect, and the exquisite agony of the pegged cow-skins was more than he could bear, even with his freedom; so, by her master's direction, boots and jack were carried triumphantly back to the plantation store by Milly, who was more than happy to thus pluck one feather from the wing of freedom.

Milly in these few days seriously questioned within herself the wisdom of Old Marse's experiment, for it had very much upset the domestic equilibrium; but Milly was a philosopher too, in a humble way, and under the existing circumstances she resolved to make an experiment also, the issue of which she was more certain of than Ole Marse was of his.

"Think I gwine hab Cage layin' roun' here in de shade er w'arin' er broadclorf ever' day—an' Ole Marse ain' do dat—an' er-settin' up he ole foots ter be fanned lack dey was sumpen, an' dey es big es all out-doo's, an' he er-pestern' me 'bout he fried chicken fur dinner lack he were white—an' dey sen' hit ter him, too. My Lord! Um—Ole Marse done los' he head ter 'low dat; but I hain't los' mine, sho mun, and I gwine git eben wid Cage. Talkin' 'bout freedom dis an' freedom dat, an' erlowin' dat hit sumpen dat Milly cain't git. Um—if hit make er body es low-down an' es triflin' es Cage be, I lay I don' want hit!"

But it was glorious to be envied—a field-hand envied even by the house-negroes. So Micajah buried his bare feet in the dust when impressing a crowd, and rose in the dignity of his broadcloth. He was a king, though even for a day, and no ancestor by the far banks of the Congo ever ruled more royally.

He was abused behind his back, but the fruits of the earth were brought to

his cabin. The horn blew in the morning, but Micajah turned over for another nap. Milly put the buttermilk on the table, but Cage had coffee from the big house; and at last freedom had grown so great that Micajah declared that Milly should stand while he was served—that a free man could not sit at table with a slave, even though she was his wife.

Then Milly rose in wrath, and laid two crossed sticks tied with hair in the chimney lock, but held her peace. Micajah shivered; ruefully he regretted his boldness, for the dignity of the free man could not overcome the superstition of the slave, and he had known Milly's work of old. Alas for Micajah! In the splendor of his broadcloth and the deliciousness of freedom he had forgotten to transfer his own hoodoo—it was even then reposing in the pocket of the discarded blue-check trousers—and Milly's charm would work!

The clearing down by the river was progressing. It was a kind of extra work, and a bran dance and barbecue had been promised in the Quarters when the task should be completed. So it was even pleasure, this sweating and hard labor, with the pot of gold, as it were, at the end; and with the "whoraw" in the Quarters attending each morning's departure, the spirit of habit even tempted Uncle Cage to join, for it was getting lonesome with nobody but the little nigger—not even Milly in the cabin to lord



"PERZACKLY LACK OLE MARSE."

it over—and the laborers were too busy to listen to him if he went idle-handed to the clearing; but he was a free man, and freedom did not stoop to such without necessity.

But latterly the monarchy was not nearly so absolute as it had been; the negroes were not half so envious. Too much familiarity and boasting were breeding contempt, and though Milly was more than welcome among them, they looked at him askance whenever he sought to join in their recreations.

Growing bolder, they quizzed his little "nig" about him, to the former's utter demoralization, poking fun at the bare feet and broadcloth; and one of the smart house-negroes disrespectfully propounded a conundrum, in effect, "If all work

an' no play make Cage er dull nigger, what do all play make him?" Milly's brother, a field hand, had actually shouted out, "A big fool nigger!" at which Cage and his fan-bearer walked away in dignified silence. But the fan-bearer was far from satisfactory; there was that in his manner which betokened sullenness rather than the awe with which he was at first infused; and though he habitually dodged, it was rather the fear of the missile than the man. There was even a symptom of rebellion, which Micajah, finding the arts of civilization deficient, promptly put down by threatening to hoodoo him with a 'gater. The imp was quelled for a few days, and during that time he spent all the spare moments when Cage was asleep in the careful examination of his legs and arms for the first indication of the 'gater, guardedly holding his breath to feel an internal or external wiggle; but as no signs appeared, he turned a pirouette on his great toe, and whispered to the watermelons in the patch that "Marse 'Cajah wa'n't nuffin but er nigger man, arter all."

But something had surely gone wrong with Micajah's fortunes. Was Milly's charm working? There it lay in the chimney lock, and Cage dared not touch it. "I knows she put hit dar fur me 'case I mek her so mad 'bout stan'in' when I eats, an' now she won' set down when I axes her: an' if hit air workin'—my Lord! den I'm done fur!" moaned Cage.

So the big-house coffee was not half as delicious as it had been, and Cage took to praising Milly's buttermilk, sharing her side meat, and courteously left her a piece of fried chicken on one occasion; but Milly would not touch it.

Then, after one sleepless night in which the crown of freedom pressed more heavily upon the monarch's brow, Micajah sought his master, leaving the bearer of the fan sobbing in the cabin from a reprimand more vigorous than pleasant. The Judge was preparing to ride, and he smiled upon the forlorn figure of Micajah.

"Well, Micajah," said he, flecking the head of a zinnia with his whip, "have you thought of something else to go with freedom?" Micajah studied his bare toes sheepishly, then covered them with dust.

"Naw, Ole Marse."

The Judge drew nearer. "Are you sick, Micajah?"

"Naw, Ole Marse."

"Then what do you want? Don't stand there all day like a dolt."

Micajah hesitated; something seemed to clog his throat, and he cleared it.

"I thought maybe, Ole Marse—I thought es how de time mought be up, an' I come ter gib up de freedom and de book."

"What? Are you tired already? Why, it is not half up. Go on and have a good time, Micajah."

Micajah looked crestfallen, and ambled off as the Judge rode away. "Er whole mont', an' hit hain't half up! Well, dar's dis erbout hit, dat's one comfort—dem niggers kin 'buse me lack dey pleases, an' dey gwine sweat an' groan fur dey fun; but dis freedom gwine ter foteh hit ter me lack I were white, ef I des set an' wait. Dey don' git tired er settin' an' waitin' fur hit ter come ter 'em, an' I des bardaciously gwine stedly some more white folks' ways 'sides totin' de book."

But the blissful contemplation ended as he neared his own cabin. In the doorway sat the fan-bearer, his tears having been wiped away by Cage's good dinner, which had arrived from the big house during the consultation with his master, and to which the imp had bountifully helped himself. Micajah's heart was sore, but he smothered his wrath until he had made his meal, while the fan-bearer, with a fragment of belief still in Micajah's powers, employed the time in feeling again for the incipient 'gater. Then Micajah rapped imperiously upon the table.

"You Amaziah!" The little negro dodged. "You infernal lazy black raskil, Amaziah!"

"Huh!" whimpered the boy.

"You lim' er Satan, you lizard-eyed nigger, don' you say 'huh' ter me! You git me er coal and light my pipe quick! Fill up dat pipe fust, you lazy purp! What you got holes in yo' head fur, hah? Um, um. Now git dat fan an' fan dese here foots twel I tells you ter quit. You heah me!"

The man of freedom was stretched at full length, with a wreath of smoke about his head, and his eyes closed to the world; the little black piece of misery was crouched beside him; and so daylight waned and the twilight came on; then the fan dropped from the bearer's hand; he was fast asleep, and so was Micajah.



"GO ON AND HAVE A GOOD TIME, MICAHAH."



"HE COLLARED HIS ASTONISHED LITTLE NIGGER."

There was great excitement on the plantation, for Susanne, the Madame's maid, was to marry Henry, Major Stone's man-in-waiting. Susanne had told the Judge of her desire, and, not wishing to sell Susanne, or to separate her from the husband of her choice, the Judge had promptly bought him for a good round sum. The Madame herself had looked to the details of Susanne's wedding-gown, for the Madame set great store by Susanne, and the ceremony was to be performed in the dining-room. Then afterwards would come the feast and dance in the Quarters until daylight, in which

the inmates of every cabin, by invitation of the bride, might join.

Micajah's cabin felt the unwonted influence, and even the little fan-bearer was in a flutter about the wedding. Milly had been bidden; carefully she laid her small store of finery upon the bed, and was softly singing to herself before going to the field. Milly believed in feasting, though, unlike Micajah, who loved to scrape his foot to anybody's fiddle, she only believed in a certain kind of terpsichorean exercise, which she called "de 'ligious dance." Hers was only executed upon solemn occasions, or commemorated special emotions, but Milly was indulgent to the general fault in others.

These fair days of freedom were losing more and more of their beauty to Uncle Cage;

the song of the mocking-bird was far less sweet, and even the crimson and black beauty of the watermelon had almost lost its lusciousness to the idle slave of freedom. But most of all the impudence of the jay-birds maddened him when they came to gather from the remnant of his meals.

Many an unpicked bone and half-finished biscuit was flung at them in the abundance, to be regretted in the after-time.

"I lay I gwine larn 'em," muttered Cage, as he resumed his solitary dinner after a vigorous onslaught, which was

about the only exercise the monarch would allow himself; and the fact was that Uncle Cage might be suspected of a first-class case of dyspepsia, for the life of irregularity and idleness was telling hardly upon his astonished organs and his temper. "I lay I gwine larn 'em—er-eatin' er my vittles an' er-callin' me 'Cage! Cage!' des es pat, 'dout eben er handle ter hit, an' erlowin' 'He got hit! he got hit!' lack hit any business er thern ef I *is* got freedom. I lay I larn 'em!"

As he grew more and more irascible the negroes drew entirely away from him, even his chosen few, and freely let him know that they could get along without him. But now the crowning insult had been offered—he had not been bidden to the wedding. It was Milly's charm—he knew that it was Milly; the fact of his freedom could not alone have worked that change in his fellows; and Milly, finding her spouse exceedingly cross upon this particular morning, wisely refrained from any but necessary conversation.

Micajah was stung to the quick, and dwelt upon his sorrow. At a wedding he was in his own particular province, and everybody knew it—that was where it wounded. They had even invited Milly before his eyes, and the messenger had sarcastically "'lowed dat es Cage were erbove workin' wid common niggers, he reckoned he were erbove playin' an' eatin' wid 'em." And the little fan-bearer suffered that day, for Micajah's feet were very hot.

At last the momentous hour arrived, and there was much hurrying to and fro in the Quarters. Here and there Susanne was swishing her wedding-skirts and bandying saucy words with the older negroes, but she did not even pause at Micajah's cabin.

But Ole Marse would permit him to witness the ceremony with the house-negroes because of his freedom, an honor which was never shared by the field-hands, and Micajah was secretly glorying, though the glory would be short-lived, for there was the long night before him with its bedlam of joy let loose in the Quarters, and he was not to be of it.

So he stood in the doorway, a shiftless figure, an alien, as it were, for he was unused to the manner of the house-negroes

and was abashed before them, and for the present he was not a field-hand, because of his freedom.

For a moment he lost himself; then the ceremony was over; Ole Mis' said something high and grand, and Ole Marse said something funny, and the little procession filed out.

The night was close and sultry, and as he sat alone in his cabin door, Micajah could hear the strains of fiddle and banjo—he was even near enough to hear the shuffling of feet. The fan-bearer was soundly snoring, after having sobbed himself to sleep, for Micajah had sternly declared "dat de slabe cain't go whar he marster hain't axed,—you heah me, Amaziah?"

As the night wore on, the fun waxed louder and louder, the spell was irresistible, and Uncle Cage was almost beside himself. He had never been left out before—and this was freedom!

At last the cake-walk was begun, and Micajah, forgetting his injured dignity, his position, and his broadcloth, slipped stealthily out to peep at the revellers through a chink; and there was Milly—his Milly—leading the walk with Cross-eyed Pete. Micajah dug his toes into the dust. Oh, how peacefully Milly smiled!

"Dat cross-eyed houn' is er-callin' me outen my name," he muttered.

His Milly laughed slyly—and this was freedom!

"How I ebber gwine make dat nigger know her place ergin?" he groaned. "I gwine git back an' know mine—dat I is. I gwine gib up dis fool freedom ef I libs ter see ter-morrer, sho I is; an' I gwine meet dem niggers on ekil groun's, an' I gwine split dat cross-eyed nigger inter kindlin' wood—sho I is—ef I libs. An' I gwine ter make de high an' mighty niggers ter-night ter eat dirt ter-morrer—dat I is—*you heah me!* I larn dat Milly ter laugh at her betters 'hine dey backs, ef I peels ever' hick'ry on de place—dat I is! O Lord, pity dis heah big fool nigger dat hain't got no mo' sense 'n ter lis'en ter de word er Satan, an' up an' ax Ole Marse fur dis heah freedom! I's done wid hit—I spits hit out. Des lemme git shet uv hit, an' I wouldn' wipe dese ole foots on hit!"

There was a movement at the door, and fearing detection, Uncle Cage slipped away to seek uneasy dreams.

Through the long hot days the work had gone on cheerfully in the new land, and now it was so nearly accomplished that the frolic was joyfully discussed.

Micajah had all along secretly resolved that he would attend the frolic, with or without a welcome, on the ground of primeval right; but the negroes, informed by Milly, or more probably by the fan-bearer, who was a most untiring carrier of tales, openly resented his intention, and now passed his cabin without a recognition, sarcastic or otherwise.

Even the fan-bearer was growing unbearably sullen; no kick or cuff could bring him out of it; his biggest flow of words failed to intimidate, and Micajah felt that his position was perilous. He more than once approached his master, with the same result—he must wait until the time was up.

It wanted but four days more to the bran dance, and here was one whole miserable week of freedom, and, alas! his freedom from freedom would come too late to save the day, so he resolved to make one more effort, and shame-faced and miserable, Micajah once more sought his master.

The Judge knitted his brows forbiddingly.

"What is the matter, Micajah, that you want to give it up? Haven't you got all to go with it that you wanted?"

"Yas, Ole Marse."

"Then what the devil is the matter?"

"Ole Marse"—Micajah's voice was very low, and his humbleness was as the dust—"I done fotch back de book, an' I done fotch back de freedom. One hain't no betterer dan tuther ter er nigger. Dey bofe on 'em lies ter er nigger, an' hit hain't nuffin but miz'ry. Dey don' 'spec' me no mo'; dey don' lis'en ter me talk no mo'. Eben Milly, my ole 'oman—dat I gwine frail 'din er inch uv her life when I gits shet er freedom—done lay er spell on me: I kin feel hit in my bones. Eben de little nigger what tote de palm-leaf fan done talk sass ter me, an' I 'low I cain't stan' hit!"

His master smiled, then bit his mustache gravely.

"But, Micajah, you must command respect—command it, and you will get it."

"I done 'mand hit, Ole Marse," said Micajah, pitifully, "but I 'mands hit lack er nigger, er big fool nigger, an' hit hain't done no good. Gittin' freedom on de

outside don' make freedom on de inside, Ole Marse. I's 'bleeged ter you, Ole Marse, 'deed I is, but I wants you ter take hit back. I's nuffin but er fool nigger, Ole Marse, an' 'fore Gord I hain't gwine cut up no mo'! I's got all I want 'dout freedom, an' I gwine be thankful fur hit!"

Micajah paused expectantly; there was a silence, which was broken by the master's firm voice.

"I am a man of my word, Micajah. I have promised you a month of freedom, and you have accepted it; I cannot take it back until the time is out. Stop your foolishness, and go and make the best of it." And Ole Marse rode away.

Micajah looked long and earnestly into the cloud of dust he left behind. The condition was desperate; something must be done.

Between the gate and the Quarters he collared his astonished little nigger with no uncertain gesture, and led him across the field towards the river, and when Micajah returned he was alone. Spying the palm-leaf fan, the emblem of his freedom and his misery, on the floor of the cabin, where it had dropped from the hand of the rebellious Amaziab, he silently tore it into shreds and tossed them from him with a contemptuous grunt.

That night a theft was committed on the plantation—a very small one, it is true, but made memorable because it was the very night that Micajah sent the little negro home. Such a thing was almost unheard-of, and the overseer, a black Hercules, was very indignant.

The next night a similar depredation was discovered, and the negroes were at fever-heat. "Reckon Ole Marse 'bout ter lose he min', ter set still an' see things ergwine on diserway an' hain't raise his han'; but I gwine raise mine, sho mun!" declared the overseer.

So a cordon of guards was formed, with regular reliefs, and the night-watch began. But the midnight wore away, the stars winked out, and the last guard slept peacefully before the rising sun, and no marauder had disturbed the stillness of the smoke-house. But something had happened. The house, the Quarters, the very air, was full of it. A runaway nigger had been caught on Major Stone's plantation, was caught stealing, and was even now being carried in handcuffs to the court-house to await his owner.

The summer season was dull enough in the little village which had the honor of being the county-seat, and the passing of the Judge's carriage was of sufficient moment to attract a knot of idlers. So, too, the little court-room was filled with the same material, even before the Judge had leisurely alighted, after his usual custom; for, as the negroes said, "Eben de toot er Gabrul moughten pester Old Marse; he gwine 'bout he business, an' hain't gwine herry fur nobody!"

The runaway was secreted in an inner chamber; nobody had even seen him, and speculation ran high; but the Judge, in the most exasperating manner possible, calmly disposed of some minor matters, leisurely joking his constituents, as was his wont, utterly oblivious of the throng of eager faces.

At last every joke had been turned and every paper signed, when the Judge relapsed into sternness.

"Bring in the prisoner!"

The mysterious door opened, and Major Stone preceded the little procession, stroking his beard in a peculiar manner, but as grave as a chief mourner.

"I've got a good one on him now," he whispered to Attorney Allen as he passed up the aisle.

Then followed the culprit, his crossed wrists in the little steel cuffs, his head bent low upon his breast. There was something painfully familiar in the figure. The now soiled and torn broadcloth, even upon its spare ebony rack, still held the Judge's outline in its creases. Ludicrously pitiful the picture, and the crowd swayed and murmured.

The Judge rose to his feet. He was thinking of green fields and boyish days, of the clear brook beyond the pasture, of the pair of honest black feet that had timed their pace to his.

"Micajah!"

There was a world of pathos in the tone. It mattered not if the whole of his little world was there to hear it—attorneys, clients, negroes, and all.

"It's comin', Ole Marse!" The pitiful wail rang through the court-room, and the old slave, oblivious of any other presence, fell prone at his master's feet.

"Take de cuss offen me, Ole Marse, an' lemme die, fur dat freedom hit ride melack er hant, an' let loose de debil in ole Cage! Take hit back, Old Marse, fur I got er whole week er dat mizerbul freedom lef', an' you wouldn' take hit back! Dat what mek me brek in yo' smoke-house fur, an'—oh Lord! It's er mizerbul sinnin' nigger, all on ercount er dis heah freedom; an' you nebber sont de oberseer ter whup me; but I were willin'—de Lord He know how willin' I were—if I mought git shet er dis heah freedom!"

There was a pause, broken by Micajah's sobs.

"Tell it all, Micajah," said the Judge.

"Dat what I taken Marse Harry Stone's tuckeys fur. I ain' want dem tuckeys, Old Marse—dey done tied out dar en de fiel' now—but I wants ter git shet er dis heah freedom! I hain't nuffin but des er po' fool nigger, Ole Marse. I hain't gwine ter ax fur nuffin ebber no mo'—nuffin but sumpen ter eat, an' mighty little er dat! You knows what's de bestes' fur me, Old Marse, an' you knows I hain't fitten ter breave de bref er life! Kill me, Ole Marse, kill me; but 'fore you does hit take de cuss er freedom offen my soul!"

A sudden gust must have blown dust in the Judge's eyes, for he winked them hard, then blew his nose vociferously.

A whispered consultation was held with Major Stone.

"That's entirely satisfactory to me, Judge"—the Major was smiling.

"The case is dismissed!" roared the Judge.